

2015: A Year in Review

As 2015 comes to a close, take a by-the-numbers look at another year in the Republican-led Do-Nothing-Congress:

- **118:** Number of days in session this Congress, as of December 15, compared to 148 days in the first session of the Democratic-led 111th Congress.
- **48:** Number of closed rules, which reduce transparency, limit debate, and block Members from offering amendments on legislation. This is compared to 44 closed rules during the first session of the 113th Congress and 18 closed rules during the first session of the Democratic-led 111th Congress.
- **96:** Number of bills that have been signed into law, compared to 125 bills signed into law during the first session of the Democratic-led 111th Congress.
- **13:** Number of major pieces of legislation that were signed into law.
- **14:** Number of rule bills signed into law requiring bipartisan support to pass.
- **8:** Number of times Republicans voted to repeal or replace the Affordable Care Act this year – 61 times total.
- **8:** Number of times Republicans broke their own three-day pledge by bringing legislation to the Floor for a vote before text had been available for 72 hours.
- **0:** Number of comprehensive jobs plans Republicans put forward.

House Republicans worked against the issues that the majority of Americans support by:

- Once again **promising massive cuts to make it look like their FY 2016 budget would balance in nine years, but hiding behind a “magic asterisk”** to obscure details on what programs they would cut, and by how much.
- **Letting the Export-Import Bank shut down** for the first time in its 81 year history. Their 157 day shutdown threatened our economic competitiveness and caused U.S. businesses to move jobs overseas. The shutdown only ended when almost all Democrats and a majority of Republicans forced a vote, which led to a provision reauthorizing the Bank being included in the highway bill.
- **Threatening the safety and security of American families by almost shutting down the Department of Homeland Security** when they refused to fund it along with the rest of government.
- **Shortchanging American students** by proposing a budget that freezes Pell grants, cuts funds for scientific research, and disinvests in early childhood and K-12 education.
- **Wasting over \$5 million in taxpayer dollars and 80 weeks** on their partisan attacks in the **politically-motivated Benghazi Select Committee**.
- **Attacking women’s health and wasting more taxpayer dollars** by setting up a select committee to investigate Planned Parenthood, despite no evidence of wrongdoing.
- **Threatening our environment by allowing the Land and Water Conservation Fund**, one of the America’s most successful conservation programs, **to expire in September**.
- Continuing to **block substantive legislative action** to raise the **minimum wage**, secure **equal pay** for equal work, offer **paid sick and family leave** for hardworking Americans, **fix our broken immigration system** through comprehensive reform, or protect **voting rights**.

Republicans' deep divisions were once again on full display as they continued to add to their record of dysfunction and obstruction. Here's a recap of what editorial boards across the country had to say throughout 2015:

Leadership Chaos: "Whether this is bad for the Republican Party isn't our concern, but **in the free advice department, we'd say being pushed into paralysis by a tiny but vocal minority isn't doing the GOP brand any favors. More important, the dysfunction and extremism that increasingly define the House are bad for the country.**" [USA Today, [10/8/15](#)]

Unrealistic Budget: "If the budget resolution released on Tuesday by House Republicans is a road map to a 'Stronger America,' as its title proclaims, it's hard to imagine what the path to a diminished America would look like. The plan's deep cuts land squarely on the people who most need help: the poor and the working class." [New York Times, [3/18/15](#)]

"In the face of these challenges, the majority-Republican House has produced a budget blueprint that serves no particular purpose except to demonstrate the inadequacy of pure, no-tax-increases GOP policy doctrine. To be sure, the document calls for an essentially balanced budget by 2025, which would reduce debt held by the public to 55 percent of GDP. It achieves this, however, entirely by cutting scheduled spending by \$5.5 trillion, the largest chunk of which would be a \$2 trillion 10-year savings from repealing the Affordable Care Act — which is **neither sensible nor politically feasible.**" [Washington Post, [3/17/15](#)]

Governing Responsibly: "...Paul Ryan, will now have to decide whether he wants to **avoid a year-end shutdown fight or give in to right-wing demands.**" [New York Times, [12/2/15](#)]

"Congress is back in Washington, which means **more intra-GOP drama** when funding for the government expires at the end of the month." [WSJ, [9/8/15](#)]

"A mere two years after futilely shutting down much of the federal government in a doomed-from-the-start effort to 'defund Obamacare,' congressional Republicans appear determined to force another shutdown in a doomed-from-the-start effort to 'defund Planned Parenthood.'" [Los Angeles Times, [9/18/15](#)]

"The bigger problem is in the House, where Speaker John A. Boehner (Ohio) is **struggling — once again — to rein in far-right conservatives** who are willing to pass a funding bill only if it reflects their priorities, in this case, by 'defunding' Planned Parenthood. That is, **they prefer grandstanding, on behalf of a cause most Americans don't support, to governing the country.**" [Washington Post, [9/23/15](#)]

"Congressional Republicans are so busy this week **flirting with a partial government shutdown** — their target is the Department of Homeland Security and its 240,000 employees — that they may have missed **fresh evidence of how badly out of step with the American public they are on the issue of illegal immigration...** As it happens, **60 percent of Americans — and roughly equal segments of Republicans, Democrats and independents — oppose the GOP's tactic of threatening homeland security funding** as a means to subvert the Obama administration's immigration policy... Increasingly, Republicans who use illegal immigration as a wedge issue are at odds not just with the Obama administration, Democrats and Hispanics; **they are also at odds with majorities of Americans in every region of the nation. That's a recipe for political marginalization.**" [Washington Post, [2/26/15](#)]

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker John Boehner pledged to work together to run the new Republican-controlled Congress in harmony, but **evidence is mounting that they aren't in sync...** The Senate's move highlighted a **growing gulf between the House and Senate, despite leaders who had pledged to work together to prove how effectively their party can govern.**" [WSJ, [2/25/15](#)]

Partisan Investigations: “A few words of advice to House Republicans concerning their \$4.6 million investigation into a terrorist raid of a U.S. compound in Benghazi, Libya: **Time to wrap it up and tie a bow on it... Your inquest is not shedding much light on the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2012**, when terrorists stormed the compound, killing Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three others. **It is doing even less for the reputation of Congress and the party that controls both of its chambers.**” [USA Today, [10/7/15](#)]

Even Republicans expressed frustration with their own party. Take a look at a few of the year's best GOP quotes:

Rep. Charlie Dent (PA): “Week one, we had a speaker election that did not go as well as a lot of us would have liked. Week two, we got into a big fight over deporting children, something that a lot of us didn't want to have a discussion about. Week three, we are now talking about rape and incest and reportable rapes and incest for minors. ... I just can't wait for week four.” [National Journal, [1/21/15](#)]

Rep. Michael McCaul (TX): “For God’s sake, if [Republicans] can’t unite around border security, what can we unite around?” [WSJ, [1/25/15](#)]

Rep. Diane Black (TN): “We've got to have discussions within our family and figure out, how do we move forward so we really can govern?... These have got to be serious discussions specifically about what happened last week and how we make sure we get to 218, because we've got the majority and we've got to govern.” [National Journal, [3/3/15](#)]

Rep. Mick Mulvaney (SC): “I’m disappointed that the message we’re sending is that if something is really important to us, we don’t have to pay for it.” [Wall Street Journal, [3/24/15](#)]

Rep. Tom Cole (OK): “‘Having charged up the hill once and been shot down, why would you want to [shut down the government] again?’” [U.S. News and World Report, [9/14/15](#)]

Rep. Steve Stivers (OH): “The charlatans who try to tell our Republican base that it’s easy and we can do all these things when we don’t have a [GOP] president and we don’t have a veto-proof majority in the House or Senate...they’re just delusional... It’s just not realistic.” [Wall Street Journal, [9/27/15](#)]

Rep. Bill Flores (TX): “If the conference cannot find a way to find unity and work together and to agree to execute a grand strategy, even though we may have a difference of opinions and tactics, I expect that there will be continuing fratricide... It’s reprehensible that Republicans are fighting Republicans...” [The Hill, [10/1/15](#)]

Rep. Frank Lucas (OK): “Until we decide that we're going to function as a team instead of as a series of groups trying to enforce their agenda on the majority of the House, then we're going to have this treadmill kind of a thing where we're just walking faster and faster but not actually physically moving.” [Associated Press, [10/3/15](#)]

Rep. Stephen Fincher (TN): “This is getting ridiculous. A clear majority of Congress wants to reauthorize the [Export-Import] Bank... So let’s just do it already.” [The Hill, [10/7/15](#)]

Rep. Peter King (NY): “But now you have a situation where there are 30 or 40 people in their own party who say they are not going to vote for anyone no matter who it is. We have to end this. We look absolutely crazy.” [New York Times, [10/8/15](#)]

Rep. Steve Scalise (LA): “The vote that hurts our conference is the no vote from a member who hopes the bill passes, but relies on others to carry that load.” [The Hill, [11/30/15](#)]